

Reading file



UNITED STATES ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY

REGION IX

**75 Hawthorne Street
San Francisco, CA 94105-3901**

January 11, 2008

Chuck Cox
Federal Aviation Administration
Northwest Mountain Region Office
1601 Lind Avenue, SW
Renton, Washington 98057

Subject: Draft Environmental Impact Statement for Horizon Air Service to Mammoth Yosemite Airport Project, Proposed Operations Specifications Amendment to Provide Scheduled Air Service (CEQ #20070497)

Dear Mr. Cox:

The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has reviewed the above-referenced document pursuant to the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) regulations (40 CFR Parts 1500-1508), and Section 309 of the Clean Air Act.

The Draft Environmental Impact Statement (Draft EIS) assesses the proposal for Horizon Air to begin regional air service from Los Angeles Airport (LAX) to Mammoth Yosemite Airport (MMH) in December 2008 with two flights per day during the winter ski season. Winter ski service is projected to increase to a maximum of eight flights per day by the year 2011. Summer service is projected to begin in 2012, with two flights per day for eight weeks in July and August. The establishment of scheduled commercial air service into MMH necessitates a change in the MMH Operating Certificate from Class IV to Class I to accommodate scheduled service by aircraft capable of carrying 30 or more passengers. The additional service does not require construction of new airport facilities. Based on our review, EPA has no objections to this project and has rated this Draft EIS as LO – Lack of Objections (see enclosed “Summary of Rating Definitions”).

We appreciate the opportunity to review this Draft EIS. When the Final EIS is officially filed with our Washington, D.C. office, please send one copy to the address above (mail code: CED-2). If you have any questions, please contact Connell Dunning (dunning.connell@epa.gov; 415-947-4161), the lead reviewer for this project.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Nova Blazej", with a long, sweeping underline.

Nova Blazej, Manager
Environmental Review Office

Enclosure: Summary of Rating Definitions

SUMMARY OF EPA RATING DEFINITIONS

This rating system was developed as a means to summarize EPA's level of concern with a proposed action. The ratings are a combination of alphabetical categories for evaluation of the environmental impacts of the proposal and numerical categories for evaluation of the adequacy of the EIS.

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT OF THE ACTION

"LO" (Lack of Objections)

The EPA review has not identified any potential environmental impacts requiring substantive changes to the proposal. The review may have disclosed opportunities for application of mitigation measures that could be accomplished with no more than minor changes to the proposal.

"EC" (Environmental Concerns)

The EPA review has identified environmental impacts that should be avoided in order to fully protect the environment. Corrective measures may require changes to the preferred alternative or application of mitigation measures that can reduce the environmental impact. EPA would like to work with the lead agency to reduce these impacts.

"EO" (Environmental Objections)

The EPA review has identified significant environmental impacts that must be avoided in order to provide adequate protection for the environment. Corrective measures may require substantial changes to the preferred alternative or consideration of some other project alternative (including the no action alternative or a new alternative). EPA intends to work with the lead agency to reduce these impacts.

"EU" (Environmentally Unsatisfactory)

The EPA review has identified adverse environmental impacts that are of sufficient magnitude that they are unsatisfactory from the standpoint of public health or welfare or environmental quality. EPA intends to work with the lead agency to reduce these impacts. If the potentially unsatisfactory impacts are not corrected at the final EIS stage, this proposal will be recommended for referral to the CEQ.

ADEQUACY OF THE IMPACT STATEMENT

Category 1" (Adequate)

EPA believes the draft EIS adequately sets forth the environmental impact(s) of the preferred alternative and those of the alternatives reasonably available to the project or action. No further analysis or data collection is necessary, but the reviewer may suggest the addition of clarifying language or information.

"Category 2" (Insufficient Information)

The draft EIS does not contain sufficient information for EPA to fully assess environmental impacts that should be avoided in order to fully protect the environment, or the EPA reviewer has identified new reasonably available alternatives that are within the spectrum of alternatives analysed in the draft EIS, which could reduce the environmental impacts of the action. The identified additional information, data, analyses, or discussion should be included in the final EIS.

"Category 3" (Inadequate)

EPA does not believe that the draft EIS adequately assesses potentially significant environmental impacts of the action, or the EPA reviewer has identified new, reasonably available alternatives that are outside of the spectrum of alternatives analysed in the draft EIS, which should be analysed in order to reduce the potentially significant environmental impacts. EPA believes that the identified additional information, data, analyses, or discussions are of such a magnitude that they should have full public review at a draft stage. EPA does not believe that the draft EIS is adequate for the purposes of the NEPA and/or Section 309 review, and thus should be formally revised and made available for public comment in a supplemental or revised draft EIS. On the basis of the potential significant impacts involved, this proposal could be a candidate for referral to the CEQ.

*From EPA Manual 1640, "Policy and Procedures for the Review of Federal Actions Impacting the Environment."